



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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March 7, 2001

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Janice Englehart

RE: Wireless Telephone and Wireless Communication Facilities

Background and Summary:

During the November Board meeting, Mr. David Fichtenberg testified before the Board with several health concerns related to radio frequency (RF) radiation exposure from wireless telephones and wireless communication facilities. During the meeting, Dr. Locke suggested that Board staff review the 1996 minutes for a record of previous testimony on this subject. Following the meeting, Chair Lake asked Board staff to investigate this issue further and report back to the Board in the Spring. Attached you will find, a summary of my review of the literature on the health effects from wireless telephones and wireless communication facilities (based on the June 2000 Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) Report - *Mobile Phones and Health*) and a summary of 1996 Board testimony on this subject.

In short, the current data on both wireless communications facilities and wireless telephones are not convincing enough to confirm that a negative health outcome is definitely associated with RF radiation exposure, however there is some evidence to suggest concern about the potential health effects from the use of wireless telephones and the secondary effects from the use of wireless telephones while driving. Specifically, there is evidence to show that RF exposure can result in short-term effects on the electrical activity of the human brain and on cognitive function. (However, there is no evidence in the literature to determine whether these direct effects have any consequences for health.) Evidence also supports that there is an increased risk of motor vehicle accidents when the driver is using a cellular telephone. While the current cancer studies show no causal relationship between exposure and disease, wireless telephones have not been around long enough for these studies to assure safety in the context of long-term exposure.

Based on the findings of the IEGMP report, the British Government and the World Health Organization issued cautionary responses. The British delivered a precautionary policy that encourages RF exposure

reduction through a number of voluntary means. (See the attached summary and recommendation section of the IEGMP report, news article, and the WHO fact sheet.)

Recommended Board Consideration:

The Board may wish to consider, amend, and approve the following statement:

The Board consider issuing a health advisory statement on this subject. The statement could include what is known and what is not known in the scientific literature on the health effects from exposure to RF radiation from wireless telephones and wireless communication facilities. It could also include precautions on issues including, at least:

- *Encouraging motorists to not use cell phones while driving*
- *Encouraging children (under 16) to minimize their cell phone use*
- *Encouraging people to adhere to established rules that require them to minimize their cell phone use in intensive care units of hospitals and other areas where their use could interfere with sensitive equipment*
- *Encouraging better public participation in the siting of base stations*